

**SUMMARY OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 16, 2002**

The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) met on Wednesday, October 16, 2002, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). Chairperson Ms. Zonetta English of Louisville Jefferson County led the meeting. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. The purpose of the meeting was *to address items of importance as indicated in the meeting agenda.*

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was called to order by ELAB's Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Mr. Edward Kantor of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Mr. Kantor reviewed ELAB's charter as an EPA-sponsored private sector advisory committee established under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). He then introduced Ms. English. Following a roll call and introduction of ELAB members, Ms. English welcomed guests Stacie Calacsan and George Kennedy of the Hampton Roads Sanitation District. She briefly reviewed the agenda for the benefit of the guests, who had not received it prior to the meeting, and moved to the first order of business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PAST MEETINGS

The minutes from ELAB's August 21, 2002, teleconference were approved, pending correction of minor errors in affiliation and contact information in the table of participants. Similar errors were noted in the minutes from ELAB's April 17, 2002, teleconference, which had already been posted on the NELAC website.

STATUS OF ACTION ITEMS

Restructuring of NELAC - Mr. Jerry Parr reported that more information about the restructuring of NELAC would be available at the upcoming eighth National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference Interim Meeting (NELAC 8i) in Santa Fe, NM. He noted that both the NELAC Program Policy and Structure Committee and the Institute for National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation (INELA) would present plans for restructuring.

Response from National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program Accrediting Authorities (NELAP AAs) in regard to application renewal timeline - Dr. Kirankumar Topudurti reported that he had contacted the NELAP AAs and the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB). He learned that the AAs would meet at NELAC 8i to review Chapter 6 (Accrediting Authority) of the NELAC Standard and that the timeline issue seems to be of more concern for EPA than for the AAs. He encouraged members of ELAB to join the AA Chapter 6 meeting at NELAC 8i. Dr. Topudurti also reported that he had not yet received the timeline data requested from the AAs at NELAC 8. The next AA teleconference will be held on November 6, 2002. Dr. Topudurti learned that one or more people from the AARB went to Las Vegas to review the application renewal file. They found that the lapsed time between application filing

date and technical report preparation date ranged from two to seven months, with a median of five months. The median is approximately twice the time specified in the NELAC Standard. Dr. Topudurti had no information about where in the process the bottleneck occurs. The AARB's general feeling was that the timelines are reasonable if application review is performed by an individual whose sole job is application review. Unfortunately, this is not usually the case.

It was suggested that ELAB contact Ms. Jeanne Hankins to get her input into this issue. It was also noted that Mr. Robert Wyeth has expressed concern about the impact of the delay on environmental laboratories and may be able to provide information and comments from private laboratories.

FORMATION OF WORKGROUP TO ADDRESS SMALL AND NONPARTICIPATING LABORATORY ISSUES IN NELAC - Mr. Parr noted that there are three nonparticipation issues in NELAC:

- 1) lack of laboratory participation to become NELAP-accredited
- 2) lack of state participation to become AAs, and
- 3) lack of EPA participation to support and recommend NELAC.

Mr. Parr reported that he had drafted a problem statement on the nonparticipating laboratory issue, incorporating comments received from Mr. James Pletl of the Hampton Roads Sanitation District. He is working on problem statements for the other two issues. After moderate discussion, it was decided that Mr. Parr would distribute the completed problem statement on nonparticipating laboratories to workgroup members so that they could begin to work on that issue while the other two problem statements are being drafted. Noting that the workgroup needs to develop clear problem statements and draft recommendations for ELAB discussion at NELAC 8i, Mr. Parr resolved to schedule a workgroup teleconference in late October or early November 2002. He also indicated that he would include Dr. Pletl in communications with the workgroup. There was some discussion of potential recommendations. These recommendations included reexamining the NELAC Standard to ensure that any requirement is essential for data quality, developing a system to help states and laboratories with implementation of the NELAC Standard, and working with EPA to encourage the agency to support NELAC as important to the issue of laboratory data quality.

Workgroup to study analyte groups for scope of accreditation proficiency testing (PT) in NELAC - Since the workgroup leader, Mr. Wyeth, was not present on the call, no update was presented. This workgroup issue is ongoing and will be included on the ELAB agenda for NELAC 8i.

NELAC 8i

Mr. Kantor reminded participants that the last day to reserve conference hotel rooms in Santa Fe at government rates would be Friday, November 18, 2002. Ms. English polled participants to determine how many members of ELAB would be attending NELAC 8i. She resolved to contact all members of ELAB via email to confirm their attendance. There was some discussion of ELAB's proposed agenda for NELAC 8i. It was agreed that the following topics of discussion would be included on the agenda:

- Action items from October 16, 2002, teleconference - Ms. English to lead discussion
- Nonparticipating laboratories workgroup report - Mr. Parr to lead discussion
- Analyte group workgroup report - Mr. Wyeth to lead discussion
- Timeline for AA renewals - Dr. Topudurti to lead discussion

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Kantor reported that he had participated in a DFO network meeting in June 2002. In that meeting he learned that new questions will be added in September 2003 to the annual summary form that all EPA federal advisory committees must complete. The questions focus on the recommendations made by the advisory committee to EPA and on the agency's response to those recommendations. The questions are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of each federal advisory committee. The charters for federal advisory committees deemed unnecessary will not be renewed. Mr. Kantor noted that ELAB had made only one recommendation to EPA in the past year. Vigorous discussion ensued of ELAB's historical process of developing and submitting recommendations to EPA. Expressing a commitment to forward progress and a desire for a substantive work product, those members of ELAB present on the call agreed to revisit past discussions of potential recommendations to the agency. Ms. English and Dr. Michael Green agreed to collaborate to review minutes for the past year's ELAB meetings to capture valid recommendations for vote at NELAC 8i. Ms. English and Dr. Green agreed to complete their review by October 25, 2002.

CONCLUSION

Ms. English opened the discussion to questions from guests. Since Ms. Calacsan and Mr. Kennedy had no questions, Ms. English turned the meeting over to Mr. Kantor. He announced that ELAB's next meeting would be held on November 21, 2002, at 9:00 a.m. Mountain Standard Time (MST) at the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, NM. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned by Mr. Kantor at 12:15 p.m. EDT.

**ACTION ITEMS
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD
OCTOBER 16, 2002**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Dr. Topudurti will contact Ms. Hankins and Mr. Wyeth to solicit their input on the issue of AA renewal timelines.	November 15, 2002
2.	Mr. Parr will schedule a teleconference for the small and nonparticipating laboratory issue workgroup.	November 15, 2002
3.	The workgroup to study analyte groups for scope of accreditation proficiency testing in NELAC will present an update at NELAC 8i.	November 21, 2002
4.	Ms. English will contact members of ELAB via email to confirm their attendance at NELAC 8i.	October 25, 2002
5.	Ms. English and Dr. Green will review past ELAB minutes to capture recommendations for vote at NELAC 8i.	October 25, 2002

**PARTICIPANTS
ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ADVISORY BOARD
OCTOBER 16, 2002**

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